

# BULLOCK COUNTY

**Honorable Michael O. Emfinger**

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## Council Priorities

### **1. Establish a Family Services Center in Bullock County with input from all agencies serving families and children in the county.**

*There is no centralized location where parents can go to get information they need to establish a plan of action. Many of our parents are single parents and their time to seek out information is very limited, especially if they are lucky enough to have a job. (We ranked 67th of our 67 counties in Alabama in Single Parent Families with Children in the 2004 Alabama Kids Count Data Book). Parents need a centralized source of information.*

### **2. Encourage economic development in our county.**

*Bullock County ranked 67th out of 67 counties in Vulnerable Families, 64th in Children Receiving TANF, 64th in Children in Poverty, and 67th in Single Parent Families with Children in the 2004 Alabama Kids Count Data Book. Jobs could provide economic security to these families.*

### **3. Provide prenatal educational services to accompany existing prenatal health services provided to young mothers.**

*Bullock County has an unusually high percentage of teenage parents. According to the 2004 Alabama Kids Count Data Book, Bullock County ranked 64<sup>th</sup> out of 67 counties in Births to Unmarried Teens, 64th in Low Weight Births, 66th in Child Health Index, and 57th in Infant Mortality Rate. These young mothers need to understand child development and the needs of their babies physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually. Providing health services without accompanying educational services does nothing to prevent problems from occurring in the future.*

# Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county

## Early Care Education

Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

### Educating new parents

#### Action Steps

- 1) Create a Family Services Center where parents can find answers to questions and help for problems they face.
- 2) Coordinate local agencies to staff, fund, and provide services through the Family Services Center.
- 3) Work toward providing local ongoing funding as well as seek grants to support a Family Services Center.

### Make quality early care and education available to all children

#### Action Steps

- 1) Make a list of all day-care and pre-school programs available in the county available to parents at the Family Services Center.
- 2) Compile an information sheet on each pre-school including curriculum, educational philosophy, costs, behavior management, etc. from information provided by each pre-school in the county and make this available to parents.
- 3) Encourage students enrolled in the local Early Childhood Education classes who exhibit a strong interest in the program to pursue a career locally as a day-care worker or pre-school teacher.

### Encourage preschool education

#### Action Steps

- 1) Encourage education officials to search for funding of pre-school education within the public school system.
- 2) Promote pre-school education to parents rather than day care as early as possible in a child's life.
- 3) Provide programs and literature for parents lauding the benefits of preschool education for two, three, and four year olds.

## Economic Security

Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

### Encourage education and training for local business and industry

#### Action Steps

- 1) Assess the needs of local businesses and industries.
- 2) Work cooperatively with local business, industry, and educational organizations to provide needed training to local schools for local needs.
- 3) Encourage business and industry support and involvement in local education.

## **Provide local career awareness to young people prior to entering the work force**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Compile a list of entry level jobs available in the county and distribute to all high school teachers.
- 2) Have top management of highly visible industry come into the schools and speak to students and parents about job skills most valuable to them when they hire new personnel (being on time, dependable, pleasant attitude, always willing to help out where needed, etc.).
- 3) Encourage support for the annual Career Fair for high school students from local employers.

## **Provide summer jobs for local youth**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Work with local agencies to provide summer jobs for students by encouraging them to fundraise, seek grants, etc. to raise the necessary money if needed.
- 2) Check with the Chamber of Commerce in nearby towns and with nearby colleges and technical schools for the availability of summer jobs for youth.
- 3) Work with local businesses and industry to provide summer jobs for local youth.

# **Education**

Children learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

## **Increase the percentage of students graduating from high school**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Provide remediation for all students who do not pass the graduation exam.
- 2) Promote career education as an ongoing part of the over all high school curriculums so that students can see how vital the high school diploma is to meeting their future career goals.
- 3) Provide peer tutoring opportunities by pairing students who are struggling academically with high achievers and promote a sense of oneness or "family" in each class.

## **Provision for drop outs and struggling students**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Offer a GED prep program after regular school hours.
- 2) Offer a Focused Industry Training program during school hours.
- 3) Encourage technical schools to offer programs locally at night so that our students needing alternative education do not have to travel out of town.

## **After school enrichment activities**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Encourage and continue to support after school programs in the arts such as dance, music, art, and in sports as a supplemental area of personal enrichment to students.
- 2) Work to provide funding for educational field trips occasionally after school and on week-ends for small groups of interested students.
- 3) Provide volunteer opportunities for students to address community needs and foster a sense of pride and value in each individual's worth by "giving back" to the community or lending a helping hand to those in need. (Fundraising for American Heart Association, Relay for Life, Camp Smile A Mile, etc.)

## Health

Children's (0 - 19) physical and mental well-being in the county.

### Drug abuse

#### Action Steps

- 1) Promote the prevention of substance abuse through education by providing an educational program in the schools for grades K-12.
- 2) Provide public awareness for the need for ongoing substance abuse prevention involvement of parents and children through PTA, YMCA, and other organizations involving parents.
- 3) Encourage a cooperative effort between high school Early Childhood Education students and the elementary school's counseling department to become involved with elementary students through the "Too Good for Drugs" program.

### Births to teens

#### Action Steps

- 1) Provide pregnancy prevention information to students in grades 7-12.
- 2) Apply for grants for educational support for pregnant teens.
- 3) Provide teen parents with information concerning support agencies.

### Prevention of child abuse and neglect

#### Action Steps

- 1) Provide educational services identifying what constitutes "child abuse" and "child neglect".
- 2) Plan, support, and implement a family services center for the county through the cooperative effort of professionals in the areas of health care, education, law enforcement, social work, and church groups.
- 3) Provide educational services concerning the causes of child abuse and neglect to parents groups and others who work with children such as PTA, YMCA, teacher's organizations, etc.

## Parent Involvement Skills

Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

### Provide support for single parent families regarding child care and supervision

#### Action Steps

- 1) Encourage neighborhoods to meet and form after school activities and supervision of neighborhood children of working parents.
- 2) Have speaker's present ways for neighborhood adults to band together to provide a neighborhood watch, after school snack, or homework assistant so that children always have an adult nearby to call on if needed.
- 3) Assist local PTO's or PTA's in providing helpful and interesting meetings during the school year that also educate parents and encourage parent cooperatives in providing quality care for children.

## **Provide experiences for children to interact with positive role models in the community**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Encourage community leaders to be involved with activities in the schools, the YMCA, 4-H, or recreational activities.
- 2) Encourage youth to become involved in helping bag food for the Bullock County Food Bank, visit nursing homes, pick up trash along the streets, etc. through local clubs, church groups, or volunteer organizations.
- 3) Provide opportunities for children to work alongside positive role models during community wide activities such as the Chunnenugee Fair, Relay for Life, the Career Fair, or the annual play "Concuh People" at the Red Door Theater.

## **Child support**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Work through the schools to encourage whole families to be involved in the child's life (non custodial parents, older siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.).
- 2) Encourage churches, PTO's and other organizations in the community where young parents gather together to provide programs in which parents brainstorm ways of supporting each other in meeting the needs of their children.
- 3) Promote and educate teenagers through school, 4-H, leadership training, etc. about responsibilities that accompany becoming a parent.

## **Safety**

Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

## **Child abuse and neglect**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Work on economic plan to provide cameras on school busses.
- 2) Promote a cooperative effort among school, city, and county governments to provide strong, visible security at schools during the school day as well as for after school activities.
- 3) Provide in-service training for school security officers, teachers, administrators, and support personnel involving safety issues of children in school.

## **Nutrition and eating disorders including obesity**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Encourage children to choose healthy snacks and foods during school by selling items such as fresh fruits, juice, and milk rather than soft drinks and potatoes chips in vending machines.
- 2) Encourage a unit on nutrition and healthy eating habits is taught in all P.E. and/or Family and Consumer Sciences classes at the high school.
- 3) Encourage elementary teachers to include nutrition and eating disorders in their science or health classes.

## **Physical activity and exercise**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Promote community participation in YMCA programs.
- 2) Continue to keep up walking areas in the city and encourage the public to form walking groups or "teams".
- 3) Seek grants to fund after school programs for children to encourage physical activity and exercise several days each week.

## **Child abuse and neglect**

### **Action Steps**

- 1) Work on economic plan to provide cameras on school buses.
- 2) Promote a cooperative effort among school, city, and county governments to provide strong, visible security at schools during the school day as well as for after school activities.
- 3) Provide in-service training for school security officers, teachers, administrators, and support personnel involving safety issues of children in school.

# **Policy Recommendations**

- Establish a Family Services Center in Bullock County with input from all agencies serving families and children in the county.
- Provide information regarding available daycare and preschool education in the county through the Family Services Center.
- Provide quality substance abuse prevention programs to all school children.
- Continue to seek and offer a diverse group of after school enrichment and recreational activities to children after school.
- Promote economic development for the county to provide secure jobs for families.
- Provide training in school safety to all educational employees.
- Provide parent education to in school teen parents to include health and safety issues, early education and behavior management issues, and child abuse and neglect issues.
- Seek and provide summer jobs for students.
- Provide support and assistance to students needing to pass the Alabama High School Graduation Exam or overcome other obstacles to graduation.